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THE INTERMEDIATE UNIT IN IOWA. (TITLE SUPPLIED).

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THE INTERMEDIATE UNIT IS A MODEL WHICH WOULD ENABLE TWO OR MORE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO DEVELOP SEVERAL COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. REASONS PRESENTED FOR FORMING SUCH A UNIT INCLUDE THE RECOGNITION THAT A MAJORITY OF RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS CANNOT BE SELF SUFFICIENT AND THAT SUCH A COOPERATIVE PLAN MAY EFFECT GREAT SAVINGS TO SCHOOL SYSTEMS. ONE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM THAT COULD BE INITIATED WOULD BE A FILM LIBRARY AND MEDIA CENTER. ANOTHER IS THAT OF CONSULTATIVE HELP WITH INSERVICE PROGRAMS AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT. OTHER POSSIBLE PROGRAMS MENTIONED WERE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, DRIVER EDUCATION COURSES, AND DATA PROCESSING INSTRUCTION. A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE LINN COUNTY, IOWA, BOARD OF EDUCATION, AREA TEN ADMINISTRATORS MEETING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1967. (JS)

The Intermediate Unit in Iowa
(Title Supplied)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Presentation by
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Linn County Board of Education
Area X Administrators Meeting
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I am, indeed, happy to be back with you in Iowa. As your chairman pointed out, it was my honor and privilege to have been the second president of this group back in 1964-1965. It is good to be back working with people that I know so well. You may recall that I was raised in Jones County, was superintendent at Newhall in Benton County for five years, was superintendent at Marion in Linn County for nine years, and have spent considerable time in Johnson County during the years that I did graduate work at the University.

I had always considered myself a 'run of the mill superintendent' and was a little apprehensive about working in the Milwaukee area which I have been doing for the past two years. I anticipated running into some really high powered administrators and schools. Such was not the case in general, and I found myself calling on my Iowa activities and experiences time and time again. We have much to be proud of here in Iowa if we just will be.

The position that I held in Wisconsin during the past two years was that of Coordinator of Cooperative Educational Service Agency #16 with offices in Waukesha just outside Milwaukee. This is Wisconsin's intermediate administrative unit which was created by the legislature in 1964 to replace the various county superintendents' offices. Since this was created by the legislature, much compromising went into its creation, and the end result was that the Cooperative Educational Service Agencies are severely handicapped. Despite this, however, we were able to make beginnings in many worthwhile cooperative projects. Some of the programs successfully begun in Agency #16 include film library, cooperative buying,

in-service supervision, test scoring, shared teachers, data processing, special education, teacher placement, and of course, reorganization of school districts was still a responsibility of that office. As a result of this firsthand experience with intermediate administration and my own frustrations as a local administrator in getting some of the projects mentioned started, I have become a strong disciple of a good intermediate service unit.

There are two basic reasons why I feel as I do. For many years we have been promoting reorganization in Iowa, and we have seen much of it. We will see much more, and I would like to think of the time when all districts will have 800-1200 students in high school. I suppose I would be pleased if all districts had 400 students enrolled in high school. The point is that even if this is accomplished, these districts are a long way from being self-sufficient. Even if we would reorganize entire counties in many cases we would not create a self-sufficient unit. In fact, there is probably only one district in Area X at the present that approaches self-sufficiency.

The second reason why we should be interested in a strong intermediate unit is that for many years we Iowans have been working for a good state aid program. I think that such a program is now becoming available, and I am sure that most of us will be pleased if the program will equalize educational opportunities and lower or stabilize property taxes even if we do pay additional income and sales taxes. If however, each district immediately attempts to become self-sufficient by adding some of the programs mentioned, we won't be any better off than we were before; and the property tax will return and we will still have the other increased taxes. I feel that every school board and administrator is obligated to

look for less expensive ways to do some of these things. I think that the cooperative plan might be an answer to both of the problems mentioned.

A part of the study of the intermediate unit study now being completed by Dr. Stephens of the State University of Iowa includes a list of many things that can and should be done cooperatively. Most of these items listed are there because you (the local administrator) indicated that it could be done most effectively and economically by the intermediate unit.

The area intermediate unit is not a new thing to the nation. We have been talking about it for many years here in Iowa, since 1960 and before to be exact. Many states are moving ahead with this plan. Such areas have been created in New York, Pennsylvania, California, and I have mentioned Wisconsin. I have also mentioned some of the successful projects. Others that might be added include in-service programs, instructional programs in reading, comprehensive special education programs, shared driver education simulators, shared vocational programs at the high school level, research, educational T.V., and many, many more.

The most obvious program is that of film libraries. This you have had operating in some of the county offices for many years and it has been demonstrated that it is successful.

I feel confident that the Iowa plan for Title II funds under the E.S.E.A. is by far the wisest of the many state plans in operation. Many of the states prorated this money out to the individual schools on a per pupil or need ratio. Thus the most went to the larger schools who already had good libraries and less need of help, and little of real value went to the small school who did not have a library or librarians to aid them in the use of the materials they did receive. It's the same story of the rich getting richer and the poor staying poor.

In the Iowa plan, all the resources of a good media center become available to all the schools regardless of their size and with this the possibility of personnel to help make these materials effective.

A case in point is that just recently we had administrators from the Lima, Ohio, schools and the county administrators visiting in our offices here in Cedar Rapids. They were searching for ideas on how they might pool their funds and develop something really worthwhile to all the schools of their area.

The second most obvious service needed is that of consultative help with in-service programs and curriculum development in all schools. Our Title III project is designed to fill this need, and I would like to discuss some of the aspects of this project.

After securing cooperation and approval of the administrators of the various counties in Area X, the Linn County staff prepared a Title III proposal to provide this type of service. This proposal was approved in the amount of $261,000 to employ consultants in language arts, social studies, guidance, library science, and supportive media. Most of the staff have been employed and are now at work with the various schools.

The activities of the project are guided by the director, an executive committee made up of three county superintendents, and an advisory committee of thirteen. The members of this committee come from the various counties and schools of the area.

The basic philosophy of successful intermediate services is that it is just that, a service available to the local school if it desires it. Therefore, in no case will these consultants come into a school without an invitation from the local administrator. This invitation can be in writing or verbal.

The progress of the project will be reported in our monthly newsletter, the second of which you just received, via the advisory committee and through the reports given at the monthly meeting of the administrators.

Naturally there is some red tape involved. We must evaluate our staff and the program. Each staff member is required to submit a written report on their work in each school. This report is followed by a questionnaire to the school visited. We hope that the local administrator will be frank in his evaluation so that we may learn of ways that will make the program more helpful. I am sure that you will be able to respond to this more fully as the year goes on.

A fourth question on the questionnaire involves an opinion from you as to where we go from here. More money will be available to us next year, and we must start planning for then now. Should we expand into other types of services such as cooperative buying or data processing? Should we expand our present project to include other subject areas such as art, music, science, mathematics? Should we expand our present areas to include such things as portable media centers, test scoring and so forth? Remember, whatever we do should be the things that will be the most help to you, the local administrator and your school.

Some people have asked me to tell them just what this intermediate service will be next year and the next and so forth. Dr. Stephens' study will provide a short range and a long range plan and will suggest five possible areas of activities: administration, curriculum, special education, data processing, and research. However, the specific activities must be of the type that will be useful to the local district. An attempt to spell these things out at this time would defeat the entire philosophy of the service being responsive to the local districts.

I have mentioned some of the things that I know can be successful because of my experience and having the opportunities of seeing them work successfully. Let me dream with you a little on just a few of them. Shared vocational programs at the high school level is one that I am sure we should all be interested in. If each school district could be comprehensive and have a complete vocational program, they would end up with seven or eight vocational shops in addition to the office practices and distributive education programs. How many of the schools in Area X can afford such an outlay of money and facilities? Why couldn't schools in a general area develop two or three very good shops and then exchange students for half a day? This type of activity makes sense to me, makes sense in the saving of money, utilization of facilities, and utilization of faculty.

Iowa law requires driver training for all students if he is to acquire a driver's license at age sixteen. The responsibility for driver training programs is with the schools. Can this assignment be done less expensively? The use of driver simulators is one way and few schools can afford a simulator by themselves. Why couldn't two or three schools share such a facility through the area service agency approach?

The use of data processing equipment for other than vocational training is an area where the imagination could run wild. The use of the computer in the classroom has many possibilities, let alone all the other types of activities such as scheduling, payrolls, census, inventories, bus routing, budgeting, staff accounting, and so forth.

The Polk County area is experimenting with the 'on line' computer approach for use in the local school system. This project was being discussed in Wisconsin just before I left.

Most of the present cooperative programs here in Iowa at the present time are due to the federal programs, Title II and the media centers, our Title III in-service program are examples. We hope that these programs will be of value to the schools and will continue at the end of the project time.

The formation of the intermediate unit to accomplish this is very simple at this time. Under present legislation, all that is required is favorable approval from the various county boards of education.

Two things have happened at the state level recently, both point towards the same goals. The Supreme Court has ruled that the present county boards are illegal and that the next session of the legislature will be requested to reapportion these boards on a population basis. A few days later, Governor Hughes proposed the establishment of sixteen sub branches for state government functions. A combination of these two factors could lead to something of interest to everyone.

I am painfully aware of the problems of the local administrator having been one just two years ago. We have no desire to become involved in the local administration of the schools, but maybe we can be of help to you local administrators as you face these problems and the progress that you desire and that is being forced upon you by society. I am sure the cooperative approach is one answer to some of these problems.